

AMESBURY'S WITCH
Susannah Martin
(1621– 1692)



Susannah Martin's house stood on this site in 1692. She was examined in Salem Village on May 2, tried for witchcraft on June 29, and hanged, on Gallows Hill on July 19. *Cotton Mather called her one of the most 'Impudent, Scurrilous, wicked creatures in the world'.* However this Plaque reads: "*Here stood the house of Susanna Martin. An honest Christian woman. Accused as a witch, tried and executed at Salem, July 19, 1692. A martyr of superstition.*" The marker is located at the end of Martin Road, which intersects with Route 110 about one-half mile west of the intersection of Routes 110 and 150.

During the late 1600s there were a great many trials charging innocent people of witchcraft. These trials became known as the Salem Witch Trials. Most of the time people do not consider that some of the innocent accused victims were from the towns in which they reside today. One of these innocent "witches" that were charged lived in Amesbury. Her name was Susanna Martin.

Susanna Martin was born Susanna North in the year 1621 and baptized on September 30, 1621 in Olney, Buckinghamshire, England. Her parents were Richard and Joan (Bartram) North. Her mother died while Susanna was very young and her father soon remarried a woman named Ursula (last name unknown). She came to America with her father, stepmother and sister. It is stated that she became an indentured servant to Captain Thomas Wiggins in order to pay for her family's passage to America.

Susanna North married George Martin on August 11, 1646. George was a blacksmith from Salisbury who came to Amesbury shortly after he married Susanna. He was also a widower. He had a daughter with his previous wife and the child's name was Hannah. Susanna and George had eight children. Their names were Richard Martin, George Martin, John Martin, Esther Martin, June Martin, Abigail Martin, William Martin, and Samuel Martin.

George and Susanna were prominent people in Amesbury. They were members of Amesbury's first church. George was part of the Meeting House's seating committee. George, for an unknown reason, did not appoint Susanna with a seat at the Meeting House. This upset Susanna and he eventually changed his mind.

George Martin was one of the first to settle in "ye new towne" and he built a frame house on ½ of a twenty-acre lot that he purchased from Thomas Macy. He later sold his house and land to Philip Challis. George later purchased land from Anthony Sadler's widow. In 1660 he moved again to a lot of land west of Ring's Hill off of Hunt Road, where he lived until death on November 23, 1686. Susanna took over residence and ownership of this land after the death of her husband.

This couple was in and out of court more often than most people would care to be. On April 13, 1669 George Martin and William Sargent Jr. had a court appearance together because George sued him for slander. Sargent said that Susanna had a bastard child at Capt. Wiggins' stable and was caught choking the child. She supposedly threatened the man with death if he told. The jury granted him the eighth part of a penny. On April 8, 1669 George sued Thomas Sargent for slander as well. Sargent said that, "his son George Martin was a bastard and that Richard Martin was Goodwife Martin's imp". Susanna's husband, George again took William Sargent to court because he said that she was a witch. The jury sided with Martin, but the court dismissed the verdict.

George Martin had to go to court On October 12, 1669 because he was abused, thrown down, his clothes taken and held up with an axe by George's son Richard. Richard received a sentence for high misdemeanor and whipped ten stripes at the Hampton Meetinghouse after a lecture. Also, in October of 1669, Susanna Martin was accused of witchcraft and tried. She was ordered to pay a bond of 100 il. for her appearance. George Martin paid the bond and Susanna stated, "I led a most virtuous and holy life.

On October 12, 1669 George Martin had another case against Christopher Bartlett for the charge of slander. George said that he was a liar, a thief, and had stolen leather. Susanna had to make an acknowledgement to the court. Mr. Bartlett died six months after he was relieved of the charges against him. He was only 46 years old when he died on March 15, 1670. His widow Mary Hoyt Bartlett would become a sister-in-law to Susanna a few years later. Another dispute recorded that Richard North passed away and left a will. This will gave all his land to his wife Ursula. Ursula later passed away and her will stated that the land belonged to Mary Winsley who was the daughter of Mary North Jones. The Martins took the Richard North will to court many times in order to prove it false. Each time the court upheld the legality of the will.

In October 1673 George Martin had been incarcerated in Hampton prison. It is said that Nathaniel Winsley had a hand in George's prison term. George sued Abraham Drake for wrongful imprisonment and won the case. George then sued Nathaniel Winsley for putting him in prison. Then, Nathaniel Winsley sued John Souter, the prison-keeper, for "letting George go out of his custody." Then John Souter sued George and Richard Martin for debts owed. Susanna Martin and Mary Jones took the aforementioned will to court again in hopes of dividing the land. This time the court said that North's will was not "legally proved" and sent the case to Norfolk court. The court was giving the two ladies a "wild goose case" and the Salisbury court determined the will legally proved yet again.

In still another dispute, Susanna Martin became concerned in a "love triangle" situation involving her son - Richard Martin, Mary Hoyt Bartlett Martin, and Thomas Teu(w)xbery. This trial went on for a long time and Thomas Tuxbury eventually promised to return to England and his family. Susanna Martin was accused of witchcraft again in 1692. A warrant was served to her on April 30th of that year. She was charged by Captain Jonathan Walcot and Sergeant Thomas Putnam with acts of witchcraft against Mary Walcot, Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam, and Mercy Lewis. Goodwife Martin was accused of many seemingly absurd crimes. She apparently caused people and cows to become "crazy" and to have fits. The cows swam into the river toward the sea until they drowned. One account of a witness said that Martin escaped blows by becoming invisible. Sarah Atkinson reported that Goodwife Martin traveled to her home in Newbury on foot. This travel was during the rainy season. The ground was muddy, but when Susanna arrived she had not a bit of mud upon her clothes and was perfectly dry. It was also stated that she transported Joseph Ring through the air to unholy events of Satan. Martin was also reported to have been the cause of Elizabeth Brown's mental disturbance. Before her trial, doctors examined her to look for marks of the devil. This process was done to many accused witches of the infamous Salem Witch Trials. Susanna fought back against her accusers during the trial.

The Trial

This part of Susanna Martin's trial has been published in many works of literature:

Magistrate: *Do you know this woman?*

Abigail Williams saith: *It is Goody Martin, she hath hurt me often.*

Others by fits were hindered from speaking. Mercy Lewis pointed to her and fell into a little fit. Ann Putnam threw her glove in a fit at her.

Magistrate: *What? Do you laugh at it?*

Martin: *Well I may at such folly.*

Magistrate: *Is this folly, the hurt of persons?*

Martin: *I never hurt man or woman or child.*

Mercy Lewis cried out she hath hurt me a great many times and pulls me down. Susanna Martin laughed again.

Magistrate: *Pray, what ails these people?*

Martin: *I don't know.*

Magistrate: *But what do you think ails them?*

Martin: *I don't desire to spend my judgment upon it.*

Magistrate: *Don't you think they are bewitched?*

Martin: *No. I don't think they are.*

Magistrate: *Tell us your thoughts about them then?*

Martin: *No. My thoughts are my own when they are in, but when they are out they are another's. Their master-*

Magistrate: *Their master; who do you think is their master?*

Martin: *If they deal in the black art, you may know as well as I.*

Magistrate: *Well, what have you done towards this?*

Martin: *Nothing at all.*

Magistrate: *Why, 'tis your appearance.*

Martin: *I can't help it.*

Magistrate: *Is not your master? How comes your appearance to hurt them?*

Martin: *How do I know? He that appeared in the shape of Samuel may appear in anyone's shape.*

Magistrate: *Do you believe these afflicted persons do not say true.*

Martin: *They may lie for aught I know.*

Magistrate: *May you not lie?*

Martin: *I dare not tell a lie if it would save my life.*

The "bewitched" children began to cry out that they were seeing Goodwife Martin on the beams of the meetinghouse.

The magistrate said, "*Pray God, discover you, if you be guilty.*"

Susanna Martin replied, "*Amen, amen. A false tongue will never make a guilty person.*"

The trial ended. Susanna Martin was convicted of witchcraft and was sentenced to death by hanging. She spent 2 ½ months in Salem Jail prior to her death. On July 19, 1692 she was hanged at Gallows Hill in Salem, Massachusetts along with Sarah Good, Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Wilde and Elizebeth Howe. Her body was buried in a mass grave.

*Let Goody Martin rest in peace, I never knew her harm a fly,
And witch or not - God knows - not I?
I know who swore her life away;
And as God lives, I'd not condemn
An Indian dog on word of them.*

- John Greenleaf Whittier

Sources:

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3. Susanna Martin and the Essex County Quarterly Courts, by Kellet, John F., Amesbury High School
4. George Martin and His Descendants by Elliot Burrham Watson, M.D. and Rev. Alven Martyn Smith, published 1929, South Pasadena, CA.
5. The Devil in the Shape of a Woman by Carol F. Karlsen.
6. The History of Amesbury, Merrill, 1880

Susannah Martin Revisited

Researched by: Terri Singer - 2002



What caused the Salem witch trials? How did a village get caught up in such madness? Even though it is a simple question, it does not have an easy answer.(3) Between 1692 and 1693 witch hysteria spread all through out Salem Massachusetts. A total of 141 people were arrested, 19 were hanged and one was crushed to death. It is said that it all started when Rev. Samuel Parris came back from Barbados he brought two slaves. One particular slave named Tituba took care of his nine year old daughter Elizabeth, and his eleven year old niece Abigail. Things started to happen when Tituba told the girls voodoo stories. The girls eventually told all the other girls in the village and they started telling each others fortunes. When Rev. Parris found out he brought the girls to Dr. Williams Griggs. The doctor could not diagnose a medical condition. He decided to diagnose the girls bewitchment.(4) The Puritans believed in Witches. It was believed that witchcraft was an entering into a compact with the devil in exchange for certain powers. To the Puritans witchcraft was a sin. It went against God and what he believed.(3) Since the Puritans believed in witches they found the witches to be responsible for all of this. The girls were then forced to give the names of the witches. Rather then admit to what probably started as a game the girls accused Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborn. The girls then kept randomly giving out peoples names they new from the village.(4) One of the women who was accused of witchcraft was Susannah Martin.

Susannah Martin was the daughter of Richard and Joan (Bartram) North. On September 30, 1621 she was baptized on Olney, Buckinghamshire, England. Susannah's mother died when she was very young. Her father then remarried and they brought Susannah and her sister to America with them. On August 11, 1646 in Salisbury, MA Susannah was married to George Martin, a blacksmith. They had eight children together. Susannah was described as a short, slightly plump, active, and "of remarkable personal neatness." She was said to be very outspoken, defiant, and contemptuous of authority.(1)

In October of 1669 Susannah and her husband George were in two court cases at the same time. George was being sued by Christopher Bartlett. Supposedly Susannah had called him a liar and a thief. The verdict found Susannah guilty. At this time George and Susannah's son Richard was taken to court for abusing his father and throwing him down, taking away his clothes and holding up an ax against him. this was presented to the grand jury at the Salisbury court. the court found him guilty and sentenced him to be "whipped ten stripes."(1)

Susannah was issued a warrant for arrest on a charge of witchcraft on April 30, 1692. She was then arrested on May 2, 1692. When the trial began on June 26, 1692 Susannah pleaded not guilty.(1) Many people had suspected Susannah of witchcraft. She did not care, she told judge Hawthorne "Let them think what they will." Susannah even did what was considered to be the unthinkable. She laughed when

all the girls were tumbling around crying in pain. Salem's trials may have had a different outcome had more people laughed at the girls events. They asked Susannah what it was that she was laughing at. She replied smartly by saying "Well I may at such folly." She told the court that she felt the girls were not bewitched, they were lying. "Pray God discover you, if you be guilty." Hawthorne replied. Susannah in turn said "Amen. A false tongue will never make a guilty person." This statement could serve as an epitaph on this Salem event.(2) After two months of mental anguish and suffering in the Salem jail Susannah was condemned to death on Gallows Hill July 19, 1692. Along with Susannah, Sarah Good, Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Wilde, and Elizabeth Howe had their bodies thrust into a shallow grave in a crevice felsite.(1)

"Susannah Martin's husband George Martin had purchased Mr. Sadler's farm a little near the Falls. The Falls is now R.W. Patten's. This location was becoming the center of business since Richard and Thomas Macy had built the new mill and small inducement there could before another removal. Mr. Currier wanted a place near his mill. So he negotiated for Mr. Martin's farm and succeeded in purchasing it. In 1660 George marked out a home on the west side of "Roberts Rings" Hill. This is now known as the "Martin Place". This was a romantic spot commending a fine view of the Southern and Western landscape and river. Stretching to the west lies the Noble Hill which forms the Northern boundary of the Beautiful Valley, known as Pleasant Valley at the time and even at a much later date covered with noble oaks and hickorys. Close in front is a little swamp which from time immemorial has supplied large quantities of blueberries and were no doubt equally productive then. In the rear of their new home on the summit of the Ring's Hill was a view seldom to be equalled. For miles in all directions the landscape lay stretched out like a panorama, embracing the out lines from "Pipestave hill" sweeping to the blue waters of the Atlantic on the east and the "Loggin Plain" on the north. Here George built his house and cleared his fields and lived here for a quarter of a century. Him and his sons gathered in abundance corn and wheat annually. Susannah and George had six sons and four daughters.

Hannah b. Feb.1, 1644; Richard b. June. 29, 1647; George b. Oct. 21, 1648; John b. Jan. 26, 1651; Hester b. April. 7, 1652; Jane b. Nov. 2, 1656; Abigail b. Oct.10, 1659; William b. Dec. 11, 1662; Samuel b. Sept.29, 1667

William died on the same day Samuel was born. A second William was born, but there are no records of him."(5)

"George honored with many offices of trust. He was one of the "Eighteen" who organized the new town in 1654 and signed the articles of agreement. He held the office of "Lot Layer" from the organization in 1654 till his death. George assisted in laying out the Lyons Mouth Lots, river lots, Great Swamp Lots, Powow River Lots and all the other lots. He was the only Blacksmith in town for some years. His records disappear in 1686 and it is probable that he died sometime during that year. After he died Susannah continued to take care of the house until she died at the Witch Trials on July 16, 1692."(5) I Could not find how or why their home is no longer standing. I do not think that is documented.

Sources

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